

Seeing the World Through the Gospel



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*Dedicated to the faithful who strive to live the Gospel in the realities
of everyday life.*

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Preface

This collection is a prayerful review of our national life. In a world where we are constantly bombarded by breaking news and social media debates, I wanted to take a step back and ask: *Where is God in all of this?*

This collection covers the early months of 2026—a time of intense public discourse in the Philippines. As you read through these pages, you will find my reflections on the tensions of religious rallies, the search for political accountability through the ICC, the environmental struggles in Nueva Vizcaya, and the deep-seated traditions of the Santo Niño and Ash Wednesday.

My goal was to bridge the gap between the “scroll” and the soul. By looking at current events through the lens of the Gospel, I realized that being a person of faith today requires us to climb our own “sycamore trees”—to rise above the emotional reactions of the digital age to see Christ more clearly. I hope these reflections serve as an invitation for you to look at the news not just with critical eyes, but with a heart seeking truth, justice, and genuine conversion.

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Chapter 1: Seeking a Higher Perspective: Faith, Criticism, and the Mission of the Church

News Story: INC rally demanding accountability and transparency

Gospel: Luke 19:1–10

One of the most widely discussed events in the local news this week was the large rally organized by our brothers and sisters from the Iglesia Ni Cristo (INC). Thousands of their members gathered publicly to express their call for accountability and transparency in government. The event generated mixed reactions from the public. Some people saw it as a legitimate exercise of democratic freedom, while others engaged in heated debates about the meaning and implications of the rally.

During these discussions, I encountered a comment from a member of the INC community criticizing the silence of the Catholic Church regarding corruption in the government. The comment suggested that perhaps the Church remained silent because it had been influenced or even paid by the current administration. This remark triggered strong reactions on social media, with many Catholics feeling offended and defensive.



Jesus teaches the crowd, inviting them to listen, seek truth, and understand God's will beyond the noise of the world.

Reflecting on this situation led me to the Gospel passage of Luke 19:1–10, the story of Zacchaeus. When Jesus entered Jericho, Zacchaeus, a wealthy tax collector, wanted to see Him. Because he was short, he climbed a sycamore tree to gain a better view. This simple action becomes a powerful symbol: Zacchaeus desired to rise above the crowd in order to see Jesus clearly.

The criticism directed at the Church invites not only Catholics but all believers to reflect on the difference between noise and mission. The Gospel reminds us that understanding truth often requires stepping back and gaining a higher perspective. Like Zacchaeus climbing the tree, we are called to rise above emotional reactions and social media conflicts in order to see more clearly.

The mission of the Church is not always to respond immediately to public pressure. At times, the Church speaks prophetically and directly; at other times, it works quietly through dialogue, discernment, and pastoral action. Silence does not necessarily mean indifference. Sometimes it reflects a deeper effort to understand complex realities before speaking with responsibility and wisdom. For Christian communicators, this Gospel offers an important lesson. Our task is not simply to react or to amplify conflict but to communicate with

honesty, calmness, and compassion. True communication seeks clarity and understanding rather than division.

Ultimately, the story of Zacchaeus reminds us that the search for truth requires humility and openness. Being a light in the world does not mean being the loudest voice. Instead, it means striving to see clearly, speak truthfully, and build bridges of understanding among people.

Chapter 2: Power, Accountability, and the Call to Vigilance

News Story: ICC Appeals Chamber denies Duterte's request for interim release

M_{atthew: 24:37–44}

This week, many Filipinos reacted strongly to the news that the International Criminal Court (ICC) Appeals Chamber denied former President Rodrigo Duterte's request for interim release. Duterte had asked to temporarily suspend the ICC proceedings related to the alleged extrajudicial killings during his administration's war on drugs. The court's decision means that the investigation will continue and that he remains accountable under the legal process of the ICC.

In the Gospel of Matthew 24, Jesus warns His followers about the coming of the Son of Man. He compares it to the days of Noah, when people were eating, drinking, and living their ordinary lives, unaware of the approaching flood. Jesus says, "They did not know until the flood came and swept them all away." His message is clear: those who live with arrogance, pride, or misuse of power will eventually face consequences. Nothing in this world is permanent—not power, not status, and not influence.



The Gospel reminds believers that power and authority must always be exercised with humility and accountability

This Gospel challenges the mindset that power places someone above accountability. Throughout history, many leaders have believed that their authority or popularity would protect them from judgment. Yet the message of the Gospel reminds us that every human action carries responsibility and that truth ultimately emerges. Jesus' command to "stay awake" is not only about preparing for the end of time. It is also a call to live with humility and moral awareness. It reminds us that every decision we make affects others and that we are accountable not only before human institutions but also before God.

However, the Gospel is not merely a warning—it is also an invitation to conversion. Just as the people in Noah's time were given the opportunity to change but failed to do so, every generation is invited to examine its actions and return to God. Accountability should not be understood only as punishment but also as an opportunity for transformation. For Christian communicators, this moment calls for courage and balance. We are invited to speak truth clearly while avoiding hatred or revenge. Justice is not about destroying others but about restoring dignity, truth, and healing within society.

Ultimately, this news reminds us that real power does not come from political authority or

influence. True power is found in humility, integrity, and the awareness that every life is lived before the presence of God.

Chapter 3: Listening Like Samuel: Turning Devotion into Action

Feast: Santo Niño de Cebu

Readings: 1 Samuel 3:1–10, 19–20

The Feast of the Santo Niño de Cebu is one of the most vibrant expressions of Filipino faith. Streets are filled with dancing, prayers, and joyful cries of “Pit Señor!” This celebration reflects the deep devotion of the Filipino people to the Child Jesus. Yet beyond the colorful festivities and emotional expressions of faith lies an important question: does our devotion lead us to action?

The first reading from 1 Samuel offers a meaningful insight. Samuel was still a young boy when he heard the voice of God calling him. At first, he did not recognize that it was the Lord speaking. Only with the guidance of Eli did Samuel learn to respond with the words: “Speak, Lord, for your servant is listening.” This moment marked the beginning of Samuel’s mission as a prophet.



Samuel's response to God teaches that true devotion begins with listening and leads to faithful action.

Samuel's story teaches us that faith is not simply about devotion; it is about listening and responding. The Scriptures later affirm that the Lord was with Samuel and that his words did not fall to the ground. His faith was proven not only by prayer but by faithful service to God's mission. The Santo Niño invites us into a similar relationship with God. The image of the

Child Jesus represents humility, closeness, and trust. Filipino devotion to the Santo Niño often reflects a deep personal relationship with Christ, especially in moments of difficulty and uncertainty. Yet this devotion also carries a responsibility.

Like Samuel, we are called not only to recognize God's presence but also to obey His call. Carrying the image of the Santo Niño should also mean embodying His values—humility, compassion, justice, and love—in our daily lives. True devotion is expressed through actions that reflect Christ's teachings.

In a society where religious celebrations are often vibrant but sometimes disconnected from social responsibility, the Feast of the Santo Niño reminds us that faith must be lived. Prayer, novenas, and celebrations find their true meaning when they inspire acts of service, forgiveness, and solidarity with others. The Santo Niño invites us to rediscover a childlike faith—not one of immaturity, but of trustful obedience to God. Like Samuel, we are called to respond with open hearts: "Speak, Lord, for your servant is listening." And may that listening lead us to act with love, justice, and compassion in the world.

Chapter 4: Carrying the Cross in the Struggle for Justice

News Story: Mining protest in Nueva Vizcaya

Gospel: Luke 9:23–26

In today's Gospel, Jesus speaks words that challenge the foundations of worldly thinking: "If anyone wishes to come after me, he must deny himself, take up his cross daily, and follow me." This invitation is not easy. It confronts our natural desire for security, comfort, and self-preservation. Yet Jesus makes it clear that true discipleship requires sacrifice and courage. This message resonates deeply with the situation in Nueva Vizcaya, where local communities continue to protest against mining operations that threaten their land and environment. News reports describe intensifying tensions as residents struggle to defend their communities and natural resources from exploitation.

The Gospel asks a powerful question: "What profit is there for one to gain the whole world yet lose himself?" In many ways, the conflict in Nueva Vizcaya reflects this very dilemma. Economic gain is often prioritized over environmental protection and the welfare of local communities. In the pursuit of profit, land is exploited, voices are silenced, and the burden carried by ordinary people becomes heavier.



Jesus teaches that following Him means carrying the cross, a reminder that the pursuit of truth and justice often requires sacrifice.

Jesus' call to deny oneself stands in sharp contrast to the logic of greed. Greed seeks accumulation and control, while discipleship calls for service, responsibility, and love. Taking up the cross means choosing justice even when it is difficult, defending truth even when it is unpopular, and standing with the marginalized even when it leads to suffering. For the people of Nueva Vizcaya who continue to defend their land and dignity, the struggle becomes a form of carrying the cross. Their resistance reflects a desire to protect life, community, and the integrity of creation.

Ultimately, the cross is not a symbol of defeat but a sign of hope. Jesus teaches that true life is found not in clinging to power or possessions but in offering oneself in love. As we reflect on this Gospel in light of current events, we are invited to ask ourselves: Are we willing to sacrifice comfort for truth? Are we ready to stand for justice and the common good?

Chapter 5: Faith in Secret: Authentic Devotion in the Digital Age

Local News: GMA News Online. (2026, February). Filipino Catholics begin Lent as churches nationwide observe Ash Wednesday; CBCP encourages meaningful sacrifice and “digital fasting” during the Lenten season.

Gospel: Matthew 6:1–6, 16–18

In today’s Gospel, Jesus teaches about the true spirit of prayer, fasting, and almsgiving. He warns His disciples: “Take care not to perform righteous deeds in order that people may see them.” Instead, He encourages believers to give in secret, to pray in silence, and to fast without drawing attention to themselves. Jesus challenges not only our actions but also our intentions. This message resonates strongly during the beginning of Lent in the Philippines. News reports describe thousands of faithful gathering in churches to receive ashes and respond to the bishops’ call for meaningful sacrifice, including practices such as digital media fasting. These public expressions of faith are beautiful signs of devotion. Yet the Gospel reminds us that their true value lies not in visibility but in sincerity.

In today’s digital age, it is easy to share every act of charity, every sacrifice, and even moments of prayer on social media. What begins as a sincere action can sometimes become a performance seeking recognition or approval. In this context, the idea of “digital fasting”

takes on deeper meaning. It is not only about reducing screen time but also about purifying our intentions.



In a world of constant visibility, Jesus calls believers to a deeper faith rooted in sincerity and humility.

The Gospel invites us to examine the difference between appearance and authenticity. Hypocrisy seeks applause; true discipleship seeks a relationship with the Father who sees in secret. When we give quietly, pray sincerely, and fast humbly, we allow God—not the crowd—to be our audience. In Philippine culture, where public expressions of religiosity are vibrant and meaningful, Ash Wednesday becomes an opportunity for deeper reflection. The ashes on our foreheads remind us that we are dust and completely dependent on God's mercy. They call us not to display holiness but to pursue genuine conversion.

Ultimately, Jesus teaches that righteousness is not measured by recognition but by authenticity. The Father who sees in secret knows the sincerity of every sacrifice. As we journey through Lent, we are invited to practice our faith not for public approval but for true transformation of the heart.

About the Author

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